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WESTERN HOMEMAKERS' CALENDAR

VITAMINS A AND D IN THE DIET

A radio talk delivered by Miss Jean Stewart, Home Economist, Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, during the Western Farm and Home Hour Friday, April 8, 1932, through Station KGO and seven other stations associated with the NBC-KGO network, Pacific Division, National Broadcasting Company.

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We now know that there are at least six vitamins, and that we depend upon them for good health. Today let's see what science has found out about Vitamin A and about Vitamin D. They group together because a few foods happen to be good sources of both. We mustn't let this confuse us, though, about our special and separate need for each. These two vitamins really do very separate things for our health.

If you get plenty of Vitamin A in your diet, you are protecting yourself against a number of troublesome bacterial infections, especially those that affect the openings of the head. Perhaps you place vitamin A in your mind as the vitamin that prevents a serious infection of the eyes, which may cause blindness. Now you and I are not likely to choose a diet so lacking in Vitamin A that we get any symptoms as serious as this eye infection. But if we do not watch our diet carefully, we are likely to be pretty close to or even below the danger line, getting just a little less Vitamin A than we need to make us feel well and to protect us from infections of the nose, throat, and ears. You can see at once that there is no more important time of the year than the present to be sure that your diet contains an abundance of vitamin A.

And that brings us immediately to the question: In what foods do we get our daily quota of this vitamin? Cod liver oil is the very richest source, but green leaf vegetables as a group are very valuable for their vitamin A content (and for the iron they contain, too, you know). Just remember in planning meals that spinach and green lettuce and all of their cousins in the leaf family must not be slighted. And there are so many leafy vegetables on the market these days at such reasonable prices that there is no excuse for any one's diet being deficient in Vitamin A. Kale, spinach, chard, turnip tops, beet leaves, broccoli, collards, mustard greens, dandelion leaves,--so many delicious greens to cook, and also a variety of salad greens; watercress, romaine, endive, escarole, and green lettuce. I keep saying GREEN lettuce because Doctor Munsell in our bureau has tested the Vitamin A content and the green outside leaves and the bleached inside leaves of heads of lettuce, and has found that the green leaves contain 40 times as much Vitamin A as the paler ones. Though all leafy vegetables are good sources of Vitamin A, the thinner and greener the leaves are, the more of this vitamin they seem to store.

There are other places to get vitamin A in the diet aside from codliver oil and leaf vegetables. Suppose you jot them down: Green string beans, carrots, egg yolk, liver, full cream cheese, and the fat of milk whether you take it as a part of whole milk or separated as cream or butter. Nature has somehow or other combined the Vitamin A with yellow coloring matter. Just

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notice that as I run through the list quickly: Carrots, Egg yolk, cod-liver oil, butter, green string beans, and all the green leaves.

And now Vitamin D. What about it? Well, you may have it pigeonholed in your mind as the sunshine substitute, or you may know it as an aid in bone and tooth development. If you are a modern parent, doubtless you've heard that Vitamin D helps to prevent rickets in children. If your own bones are straight and strong, and your teeth are sound and healthy, you've gotten Vitamin D somewhere along the way whether intentionally or otherwise! And you probably need some of it still to keep your bones and tooth tissue healthy. But it is in the feeding of babies and young children that we emphasize the absolute necessity of Vitamin D. We speak of the importance of giving foods rich in this bone and tooth building vitamin, we urge cod-liver oil for this reason, and we explain that sunlight especially in summer when the ultra violet rays are most abundant, helps to produce vitamin D in the human body. So sun baths, you see, aren't just a fad; nor is cod-liver oil to be classed with medicine. Sun baths in summer and daily doses of cod-liver oil at least in winter are just as surely aids to good nutrition and good health as are carefully planned diets. And since Vitamin D is not plentiful in many of the common foods, children requiring such an abundance of it, really need sunshine and cod-liver oil. Even milk so valuable for most of the needs of the growing child may be a very poor source of Vitamin D. That is why young babies who depend so largely on milk for their nourishment, and in fact all children up to the age of about two years, are safer with cod-liver oil and sunlight. The other sources of Vitamin D are egg yolk, butter, and oily fish such as salmon, herring, and sardines. You remember that I said a while ago that a few foods contain both A and D? I was thinking of cod liver oil, egg yolk and butter.

That's about all I have time to tell you today. I hope you will not let any one discount the importance of vitamins A and D for all of us, old and young alike, and I hope too that you will remember especially the need of young children for sunshine, cod-liver oil, egg yolk, butter and the green and yellow vegetables for growth and health.